Thinking of you

Electrolux



Mini Guide to hygienic laundry practices

based on the RABC system/EN 14065

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Hygienic laundry



Laundry is found throughout a hospital or care home: uniforms, bed linen, catering articles, surgical dress, cleaning items (i.e. mops), patient clothing, etc. Laundry plays an essential role in patient comfort whilst protecting employees in their place of work.

Laundry is a potential carrier of healthcare acquired infections.
It is therefore vital to control its flow. Special measures must be taken to ensure hygiene levels are maintained. The laundry items themselves must not pose a threat to health and remain innocuous at every stage of their storage, use and handling.

The key to this is to implement as strict process for all linen to be processed, whether it is potentially poses a threat to health or not.

Dirty laundry can spread germs to other areas and therefore the clean linen needs to be handled as carefully as the dirty. This requires an in-depth understanding of laundry flows, the correct use of fabrics suitable to the task and working practices which ensure the employees are aware of how their every day actions can impact the laundry operation.

In the current climate whereby hospitals must be able to produce documentation to prove the quality of the processes used, the laundry flow implemented must ensure permanent control systems are in place to minimise and prevent the risk of healthcare acquired infections.

Linen hygiene is a key part of your overall quality process. The following stages can be tailored to every kind of laundry set up; carrying out an audit of the existing process, risk assessment, drawing up preventative measures, creating standard operating procedures and implementing quality assurance procedures that are evaluated and monitored at various intervals. In addition, any service provider should be selected according to specifications and defined hygiene standards.

With this in mind, please take the time to read this “Mini Guide to hygienic laundry practices based on the RABC system*/EN 14065”.
We hope you find it useful.

* Risk Analysis Bio-contamination Control

Storing and sorting dirty laundry

Measures recommended under European Guidelines



European norm no. EN 14065 recommends that dirty laundry be delivered to the laundry daily in coloured textile bags as follows:

Large flat laundry:
One colour for bags containing sheets etc, all types of textiles, all sizes.

Small flat laundry:
One colour for bags containing pillow cases, bolster cases, all catering laundry, kitchen towels and aprons, handkerchiefs, hospital gowns, nightdresses and pyjamas.

Laundry to be tumble-dried:
One colour for bags containing all towels, flannels etc

All other laundry:
One colour for bags containing all other bedding, clothing, furnishings

Staff uniforms and “at risk” laundry is excluded from the above pre-sorting process.

- **Collect textiles separately**
- **Do not store dirty laundry for long periods**
- **Do not bring dirty laundry into contact with clean laundry during transport**

Advice from professionals



The packing does not meet the expected barrier properties (risk of infection)

- Any packing or wrapping system, other than dirty laundry collection bags, specially designed for this purpose must be avoided (e.g. bin bags, sheets knotted to form bundles).
- Do not use RED bags, as this colour is only for transferring “at risk” laundry.
- Only use textile bags. Plastic bags are more expensive and encourage mould to form which can seriously alter the fibres of the textiles.
- The colour of the bag must indicate its contents, not its origin. The origin will be written on the handle at the bottom of the bag.
- Laundry bags must always be closed correctly once they are full.
- Always use clean collection bags that close properly and are in good condition.
- For ergonomic reasons, do not fill bags more than two-thirds full.
- The maximum ideal load should not exceed 10 kg.



Risk: Cross contamination (risk of infection)

- Dirty laundry must be packed without it coming into contact with clean laundry.
- Mixed trolleys (clean and dirty) must never be used: use lightweight collection trolleys that are easy to clean and disinfect.
- Closing the collection bags must not generate aero-biocontamination: the type of collection trolley used (with or without cover, with or without foot pedal…) must be chosen in accordance with the risks of aero-biocontamination and cross contamination.
- The dirty laundry collection bag support trolley must be regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- The dirty linen area must be at lower air pressure compared to the clean linen area.

Washing

Measures recommended under European Guidelines

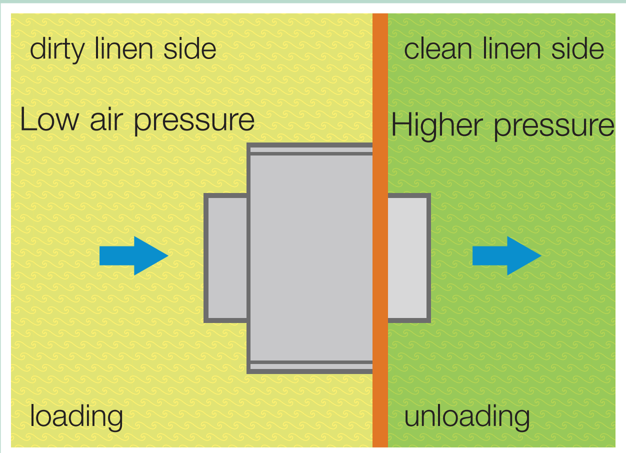


- **Guarantee a complete decontamination of the washed linen**
- **Respect the service life of the fibres**
- **Develop a specific approach for “at risk” laundry**

Advice from professionals

- Install washing equipment in a barrier configuration to prevent any dirty laundry being loaded into the washing machines coming into contact with the clean laundry being taken out of the machines
- Adapt the detergents to the level of soiling
- Respect the wash programmes (pH, water hardness, temperature, water levels, time laundry is in contact with the detergent, machine filling ratio)
- Use bactericidal products on all textiles washed at 60° or below
- Wash by textile family: a textile family is not made up of articles of the same texture but articles to be finished in the same way

For example:
If you wash a cotton pillowcase and a cotton terry towel, you actually mix two different textile families. When the laundry is taken out of the machine, the pillowcase goes to the ironer whereas the terry towel goes into the tumble dryer. As the two finishing processes are different, the laundry operator will have to sort the clean laundry. This should be avoided at all costs.



Washing equipment
in a barrier configuration

Transfer from washing to drying

Measures recommended under European Guidelines



- **Do not store for long periods**
- **Do not store in unsuitable places**
- **Do not handle at the wrong time**

Advice from professionals



- **Just in time production**
- **Do not store laundry at intermediate points**
- **Never sort dirty laundry in the clean area**

Drying and finishing

Measures recommended under European Guidelines



- **Ensure correct temperatures and contact times are adhered to during the finishing (ironing) process**
- **Ensure that filling ratios in the drying process are not exceeded**
- **Reduce the number of times the clean linen is handled from the time it is taken out of the washer until it leaves the laundry room (a maximum of four handlings)**

Advice from professionals

- **Work in a strict flow per textile family**
- **Immediately store finished items**
- **Recommended procedure for large flat linen (cotton and poly cotton):**
  Unload the barrier washer
  Feed into the ironer
  Immediately store in the department, ward, trolley or patient's/resident's wardrobe
- **Recommended procedure for laundry to be tumble-dried:**
  Unload the barrier washer
  Transfer into tumble dryer (never on hangers)
  Fold manually
  Immediately store in the department trolley etc
- **Recommended procedure for laundry to be ironed:**
  Unload the barrier washer
  Pre-dry
  Iron
  Fold manually
  Immediately store in the department trolley etc
- **Recommended procedure for laundry to be tumble-dried:**
  Use the tumble dryers very strictly.

Dryers consume energy: be careful not to lose heat by leaving the door open after use:

- Do not leave the door open after unloading and before loading the next batch (10° lost each minute the door is open).
- Clean the lint/fluff filter regularly during the day. Clean filters reduce energy use.
- Do not over-dry laundry if it is to be ironed after drying. If it is too dry, it will need re-wetting for finishing.
- Test the drying time for each type of article and write down drying times per textile family.
- Respect the filling ratio: if laundry piles up against the loading door, it means that the dryer is overloaded. The laundry must rotate freely all over the drum.
- Don't hesitate to let the dryer run empty for a few minutes between two loads. It costs less and saves time since you will not have to heat it up at the next load.
- Never leave hot laundry in the dryer at the end of the working day (fire hazard). It is better to leave wet laundry overnight and dry it the next morning.
- Use the "cooling" button for the last cycle of the day.

Protection

Measures recommended under European Guidelines



- **Protect the laundry by storing in mobile trolleys**
- **Follow the advised storage and delivery times**

Advice from professionals

- Cover with plastic microporous film and/or keep in trolleys or closed cabinets.



Risk: Clean laundry may be contaminated during these operations.

- Regularly disinfect and clean premises where clean laundry is stored.
- Keep premises separate from areas where dirty laundry is in transit.
- Close the doors to stop air turbulence.
  Ensure that the air pressure in the clean area is higher than the dirty area.
- Regularly disinfect and clean trolleys and/or cabinets used t o transport clean laundry.
- Repairing, cleaning and disinfecting trolley covers is easier if an extra set is available.
- Wrap clean laundry into microporous plastic film.
- Re-wash all the clean laundry back from the care departments, unless it is wrapped and the wrapping has not been damaged.

Transport

Measures recommended under European Guidelines



- **Have a means of transport reserved exclusively for clean laundry**
- **Use materials that can be decontaminated**
- **Follow the advised flows to avoid clean laundry coming into contact with dirty laundry**

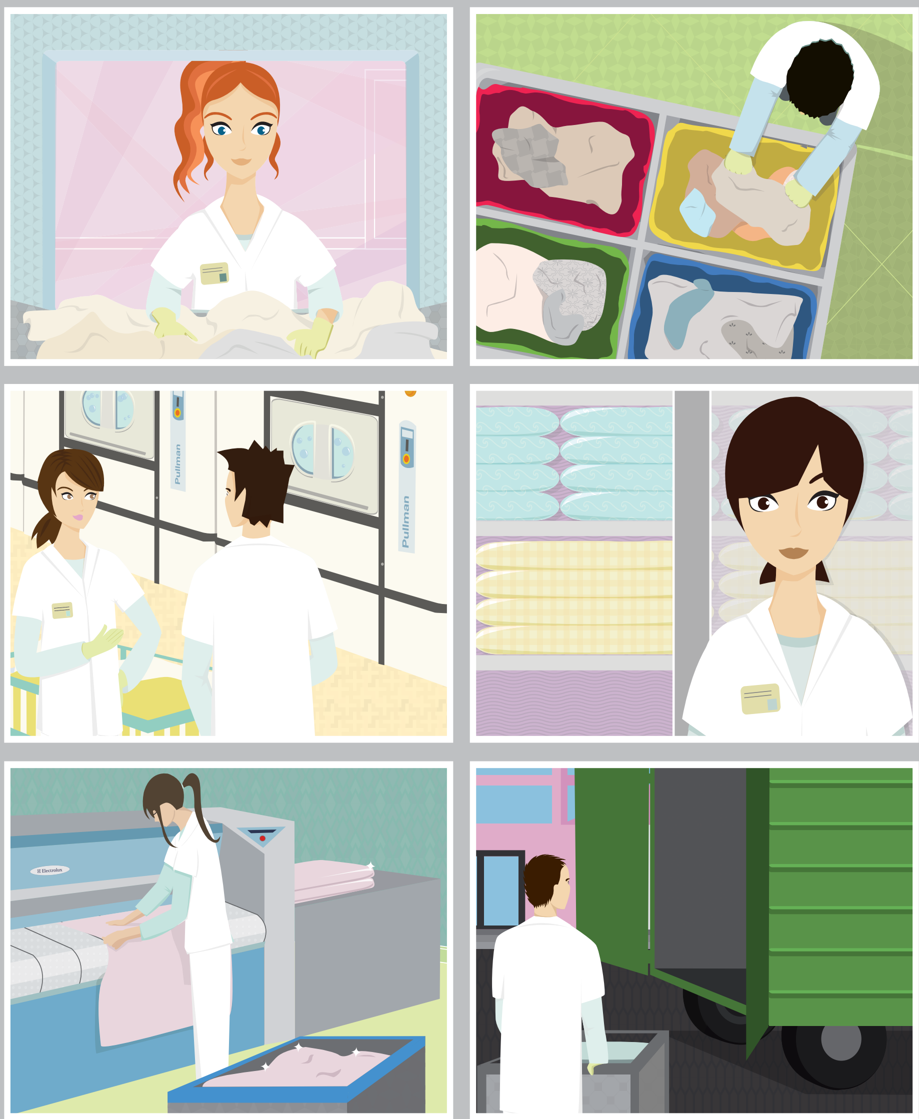
Advice from professionals

- Appropriate lorry reserved exclusively for delivery of clean laundry.
- For transport vehicles, an internal disinfection procedure should be adopted.
- Respect the immobilisation intervals.



Risk: Transport conditions can favour contamination of clean laundry.

- Prepare clean laundry deliveries in covered trolleys or closed cabinets.
- Deliver trolleys or cabinets directly to the department/ward.
- Laundry must be wrapped appropriately for the risks and transported in closed vehicles used exclusively for this purpose..
- If the clean and dirty laundry flows meet, it is necessary to use an airtight wrapping for the clean and the dirty linen.
- A cleaning and disinfection plan must be put together in order to define how the surfaces of vehicles and equipment used for transporting and delivering clean laundry are to be maintained (lorry cab and body, trolleys or cabinets, covers…)


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Note

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Environment

Being environmentally friendly is more than just a concern to us. It means being truly conscious and totally committed to environmental issues at every stage of the industrial cycle, from design to manufacturing. The ISO 14001 certification guarantees our long-term commitment.

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